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**Baseball cap, white tennis shoes, "NYC" sweatshirt – some Americans can shout out their nationality without ever saying a word. Before heading out the door when traveling or living abroad, ensure that you haven't put yourself at undue risk due to your appearance.**

## Out 'n' about? Blend in for safety

By The Citizen

**T**he current atmosphere of heightened security should not keep American military members and civilians from enjoying the sights in Europe.

For example, attending German fests or fasching events can be fun adventures that introduce Americans to their host country.

However, certain safety precautions should always be taken in order to ensure a safe and pleasant experience.

All individuals should exercise caution and common sense when venturing out. The 6th Area Support Group security office offers the following guidelines:

- Maintain a low profile. Avoid being obnoxious and loud. Your conduct and mannerisms should not attract attention. Keep voices low.

- Don't go out in large groups. Smaller groups are much less likely to be noticed.

- Dress to blend in – not to stand out. Certain types of clothing (for example, cowboy hats, white tennis shoes and baseball caps) may identify you as an American. Try to wear something more typical of what Europeans would wear.

- Be alert to your surroundings. Watch for suspicious people. If you think you are being followed, go to a secure area (the German Polizei always have a station at fests).

Never confront the individual following you, but obtain the best possible description and report it to the police.

### Have fun – but stay safe

- Travel in a small group.
- Dress to blend in.
- Conceal military affiliation.
- Be alert for suspicious individuals and situations.
- Supervise children closely.
- Limit alcohol intake.



- If possible, park your vehicle in a secured lot. Otherwise, try to park in a well-lighted area. Parking can be a nightmare if you visit a fest in the evening. It's simpler to take public transportation.

- The possibility of children becoming lost is real. If children are along, watch them closely and choose a meeting point in case someone becomes separated from the group.

Talk to children about what to do in such a situation.

- Don't discuss your military affiliation with strangers.

- Limit alcohol intake. Try not to overindulge, and plan transportation home in advance. Have a designated driver. This is important for those who leave their cars at park-and-ride stations, too.

## Criminals target travelers' automobiles, wallets

U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of Consular Affairs

In many places frequented by tourists, including areas of southern Europe, victimization of motorists has been refined to an art.

Where it is a problem, U.S. embassies are aware of it and consular officers try to work with local authorities to warn the public about the dangers.

In some locations, these efforts at public awareness have paid off, reducing the frequency of incidents.

Carjackers and thieves operate at gas stations, parking lots, in city traffic and along the highway. Be suspicious of anyone who hails you or tries to get your attention when you are in or near your car.

Criminals use ingenious ploys. They may pose as "good Samaritans," offering help for tires that they claim are flat or that they have made flat. Or they may flag down a motorist, ask for assistance and then steal the rescuer's luggage or car.

Usually they work in groups, with one person carrying on the pretense while the others rob you.

Other criminals get your attention with abuse, either trying to drive you off the road, or causing an "accident" by rear-ending you or creating a "fender bender."

In some urban areas, thieves don't waste time on ploys – they simply smash car windows at traffic lights, grab your valuables or your car and get away.

In cities around the world, "defensive driving" has come to mean more than avoiding auto accidents; it means keeping an eye out for potentially criminal pedestrians, cyclists and

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scooter riders.

Both in and out of vehicles, travelers should avoid carrying large amounts of cash.

Also, change travelers' checks only as currency is needed – and make sure to countersign them only in front of the person who will cash them.

Do not flash large amounts of money when paying a bill. Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction.

Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money, buy airline tickets or purchase souvenirs. Do not change money on the black market.

If your possessions are lost or stolen, report the loss immediately to the local police. (A state-side driver's license, department store credit cards, and other nonessential means of identification should have been kept at home to begin with.) Keep a copy of the police report for insurance claims and as an explanation of your plight. After reporting missing items to the police, report losses or thefts to the following:

- travelers' checks: nearest agent of the issuing company.

- credit cards: the issuing company.

- passports: nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

## Travel safety starts at home: Precautions thwart criminals

U.S. Army Installation Management Agency, Europe Region, Release

*Staying alert and taking the following precautions can help ensure safety both at home and on the road:*

### Before departure

- Do not discuss travel plans in public places; only tell those who need to know the details (for example, one's unit or supervisor).

- Check the U.S. State Department Web site for security information on all countries to be visited or travelled through.

- Ensure that all doors and windows – including those in the garage – are secure.

- Use automatic timers to turn lights, radios and televisions on and off to make it appear as if someone is home.

- Unplug all unnecessary electrical equipment

- Ask a neighbor to keep an eye on the home and remove mail and newspapers.

- Ask a neighbor to draw the curtains in the house at night and open them in the morning.

- Do not hide a spare key; instead leave one with a trusted neighbor.

- Use civilian addresses for tickets and other travel documents.

### On the road

- Never leave keys unattended.

- Never leave luggage unattended.

- Never carry packages for other people.

- Do not display military identification, stickers or unit logos.

- Do not leave items of military equipment or clothing visible in the car.

- Conceal military-issued car passes.

- Keep a low profile, and be discreet in revealing NATO and military affiliation.

- Do not flash large sums of money, and do not carry documents, credit cards or unnecessarily large sums of money.

- Carry valuables and belongings in a secure manner.

- Check the underside of unattended vehicles before entering them.

- Avoid secluded areas, poorly lighted streets and alleys.

- Stay away from known "trouble spots."

- Be wary of pickpockets, especially in crowded areas.

